

The Quran Speaks

BAHIS SEDQ

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*This book is dedicated to the hope and vision
of a world undistracted by religious divisions—
a truly wonderful world!*

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THE “SATANIC” VERSES

And O Muhammad (it has always been so with) every Messenger and Prophet We sent before you that whenever he had a desire, Satan tried to interfere with his desire. But Allah eradicates the mischiefs worked by Satan and confirms His revelations, for Allah is All-knowing, All-Wise.¹

“Satanic Verses” is a term authored by William Muir.² According to many of the Prophet’s earliest biographers, Satan once appeared before Muhammad in the form of Gabriel and “revealed” verses that compromised the “Oneness” of Allah by permitting intercession by certain goddesses. Thinking the verses were from Allah, Muhammad disclosed them as part of the Quran. Gabriel then intervened to inform him that Satan had played a trick. These verses were thereupon stricken from the Quran, on the pretext that these were not from Allah but that Satan had managed to deceive the Prophet. They are hence labeled “Satanic Verses.”

The incident, if true, would be devastating to the credibility of the Prophet and the Quran. Muslim scholars concede:

If the Prophet could confuse the words of Satan for those of Gabriel on this occasion and on this fundamental point, then why not on other, less significant points as well?³

The stakes, though, are decidedly higher. If the account were to be true, if the Prophet confused the words of Satan for those of Gabriel on this fundamental issue, not just “other less significant points,” the whole of the Quran would be suspect. Who is to say that, having made a strategic concession to the Quraysh that he later regretted, perhaps because it failed to create the desired result, the Prophet did not invent the story to get out of the situation and that Satan had no role except for providing a convenient excuse? In such a case, could it also not be said that the Quran is entirely Muhammad’s own creation?

The matter hence deserves the closest scrutiny. We must strip the myth from the facts. We begin with a look at Arab polytheism, in which context the incident is stated to have taken place. This should help place the subsequent discussion in perspective.

ARAB POLYTHEISM

Surprisingly, it wasn’t Muhammad who introduced the Arabs (at least those living in and around Mecca) to Allah. They already believed in Him. Thus, even the cry “*Allah Akbar*” (God is Great) predates Islam!⁴ The Ka’ba, too, was dedicated to Allah’s worship, and though it also had 360-odd idols, they were meant merely as intercessors to Allah.

This important fact is substantiated by Muslim historians as well as by the Quran.

- ***Abraham’s attack on the Ka’ba***

That the polytheists of Mecca believed in Allah is stated for instance in accounts handed down to Muslim historians regarding Abraham, the ruler of Yemen, who came to destroy the Ka’ba some years prior to the advent of Islam. It is written that the Quraysh vacated the city, imploring Allah to save the holy Ka’ba. Responding to the prayers, Allah sent swarms of birds carrying

stones in their beaks and claws, which were showered on Abrahah's troops, causing them to withdraw in panic.*

The incident also finds mention in the Quran:

Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with the people of the elephant? Did He not cause their plan to end in vain? And sent down on them swarms of birds, which pelted them with stones of baked clay. Then He rendered them like straw eaten up by cattle. (105:1–5)⁵

An interesting fact may be mentioned here, at the cost of slight digression. A few years after the death of the Prophet, the Ka'ba caught fire during infighting (as a result of events in Karbala, in which the Prophet's grandson was martyred). The fire destroyed the House of Allah⁶ and also shattered the *hajre-aswad* into many pieces.⁷ What we see today is the pieces stitched together. Allah did not intervene on this occasion.

- ***The Quran on the Arab belief in Allah***

The Quran, too, mentions that the Arabs believed in Allah:

If you ask them, "Who has created the earth and the heavens and Who has subjected the moon and the sun?" *they will surely say, "Allah."* How are they then being deceived? ... If you ask them, "Who sent down rainwater from the sky and thereby

* Maududi, for instance, collates (though this is a shortened account):

There were at that time 360 idols in and around the Ka'bah, *but on that critical moment they forgot them and implored only Allah for help.* Next morning Abrahah prepared to enter Makkah, but his special elephant, Mahmud, which was in the forefront, knelt down. It was beaten with iron bars, goaded, even scarified, but it would not get up. In the meantime swarms of birds appeared carrying stones in their beaks and claws and showered these on the troops. Whoever was hit would start disintegrating. The same thing happened with Abrahah too. His flesh fell in pieces and there arose sores on his body emitting pus and blood. In confusion they withdrew and fled towards Yemen. (Maududi: *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, commentary on *Surah Al-Fil*, Volume 6, pp. 532–533)

† The black stone/meteorite revered by Muslims and believed to have been used by Abraham and Ismail to construct the Ka'ba.

raised the dead earth back to life?" *they will surely say, "Allah!"* (29:61–63)

If you ask them, "Who created the heavens and the earth?" they will say, "Allah." (39:38)⁸

The roles they ascribed to gods and goddesses were merely of intercessors to Allah, not more than that. This, too, is recorded in the Quran:

These people worship besides Allah those which can neither harm nor benefit them, and say, "*These are our intercessors with Allah.*" (10:18)⁹

As for those who have taken other guardians besides Him (and justify their conduct, saying): "*We worship them only that they may bring us closer to Allah.*" Allah will surely judge between them concerning all that in which they differ. (39:3)¹⁰

The Quran misunderstands the polytheists' faith, though. It accuses the Quraysh of holding partners with Allah,¹¹ whereas they worshipped the deities only as intercessors to Allah—not the same thing as holding partners.* The Quran's failure to appreciate this subtlety may partly be responsible for why it made no headway in the Prophet's initial years in Mecca. The Quraysh, at least, may not have viewed themselves as *mushrikin* (polytheists) or "disbelievers," as the Quran accused them of being. They may even have resisted the charge, as certain verses of the Quran seem to reflect.¹²

Amongst hundreds of deities considered by the Quraysh to be intercessors with Allah were three goddesses Al-Lat, Al-'Uzza, and Manat. They were not located in the Ka'ba but held prominence. The incident of the Satanic Verses relates to these goddesses.

* This is not much different, it would seem, from the belief many Muslims entertain all across the globe that certain saints, for instance, can intercede with Allah—hence the popularity of shrines dedicated to them!

THE INCIDENT OF THE SATANIC VERSES

Ibn Ishaq reports:

When the apostle saw that his people turned their backs on him and he was pained by their estrangement from what he brought them from God *he longed that there should come to him from God a message that would reconcile his people to him*. Because of his love for his people and his anxiety over them it would delight him if the obstacle that made his task so difficult could be removed; so that he meditated on the project and longed for it and it was dear to him.¹³

It was out of this longing for a message as may reconcile him with his people, that Muhammad is said to have made a concession regarding the three goddesses (Al-Lat, Al-Uzza, and Manat) that they could intercede with Allah. Ibn Ishaq goes on to record:

When Quraysh heard that, they were delighted and greatly pleased at the way in which he spoke of their gods, and they listened to him; while the believers were holding that what their Prophet brought them from their Lord was true, not suspecting a mistake or a vain desire or a slip. ... The news reached the Prophet's companions who were in Abyssinia, it being reported that Quraysh had accepted Islam, so some men started to return while others remained behind. Then Gabriel came to the apostle and said, "What have you done, Muhammad? You have read to these people something I did not bring you from God and you have said what He did not say to you." The apostle was bitterly grieved and was greatly in fear of God. So God sent down (a revelation), for He was merciful to him, comforting him and making light of the affair and telling him that every prophet and apostle before him desired as he desired and wanted what he wanted and Satan interjected something into his desires as he had on his tongue. So God annulled what Satan had suggested and God established His verses i.e. you are just like the prophets and apostles. Then God sent down: "We have not sent a prophet or apostle before you but when he longed Satan cast suggestion into his longing. But God will annul what Satan

has suggested. Then God will establish his verses, God being knowing and wise.” Thus God relieved his prophet’s grief, and made him feel safe from his fears and annulled what Satan had suggested in the words used above about their gods by his revelation: “Are yours the males and his the females? That were indeed an unfair division” (i.e. most unjust); “they are nothing but names which your forefathers gave them” as far as the words “to whom he pleases and accepts,” i.e. how can the intercession of their gods avail with Him?¹⁴

Some analysts are of the opinion that this account must be accepted as true simply because Muslim historians would not have invented a story so damaging to the Prophet. Maududi recognizes the merit in this argument.

How is it that so many reporters of Traditions have related this story? Does it not show that there must have been some reality about it? So many reporters, who included many authentic and eminent scholars, could not have made such an heinous slander against the Quran and the Holy Prophet.¹⁵

But then Maududi dismisses the possibility that the Prophet could ever be misled by Satan on such a fundamental point.* Hashmi

* He notes:

As regards a believer, he can never accept it, when he knows that it contradicts not only one verse but a large number of other verses of the Quran. He would rather believe, that the reporters of the Tradition might have been deluded by Satan and not the Holy Prophet. He would never believe that the Holy Prophet could interpolate even a single word in the Quran under the influence of a desire of his own: or that there could ever occur such a desire in his mind that he should make a compromise with the disbelievers by associating shirk with Tauhid: or that he could ever wish that Allah might not say anything to displease the disbelievers: or that the Revelation was made in such an unsafe and doubtful manner as to enable Satan to mix with it even a word in a manner as if it was also brought by Gabriel. Each of these things is contradictory to the clear Revelation of the Quran and the basic Articles of the Faith which we have learned from the Quran and the Holy Prophet. God forbid that we should accept any such Tradition that might lead to the above mentioned presumptions just because the Tradition seems to be “authentic” in every way. (Maududi: *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, note 101 to *Surah Al-Hajj* Volume 3, pp. 221–222)

too is satisfied that the story is not genuine, offering the following reasons:

The story of the satanic verses is implausible because it is completely opposed to the entire Quran and to all other reports on the attitude and behavior of the Prophet during the Meccan period.¹⁶

It is worth inquiring, though, whether the story really is so opposed to the Quran and to the attitude of the Prophet, particularly during the period when the incident is stated to have taken place.

THE QURAN ON THE SATANIC VERSES

Let us first state the crux of the incident. It is as simple as this: Muhammad at one point accepted intercession by the three goddesses but then withdrew the concession on the ground that Satan had misled him.* Let us see if we can find this documented in the Quran.†

Before we come to the verses that are more directly implicated in the incident, it would help to consult some others that are also indicative of the incident.

- *The Prophet’s inclination*

The Quran documents a certain despondent phase in Muhammad’s life, resulting from the fact that despite preaching in Mecca for a number of years, he failed to make any appreciable impact. The message by and large was rejected. This caused the

* Some historians add that the concession regarding the three goddesses was made at the time *Surah An-Najm* was being recited by the Prophet, which caused all those present on the occasion (including some of the Quraysh) to prostrate. We are less interested in this detail (which some find implausible) and will focus on the more essential features of the incident.

† The exact reason why the Prophet may have withdrawn the concession—whether it was because he thought the better of it, or because it failed to create the desired effect with the Quraysh, or perhaps even that he was truly corrected by Gabriel—can be debated separately.

Quran to announce that if not men, the jinn, at least, had started to convert!¹⁷

During the same despondent phase, the Quran also softened its position just a little regarding intercession: “And no intercession before Allah can avail anyone except for the one for whom Allah permits it” (34:23).¹⁸ The absolute rule against intercession seems compromised here—and so, in the precise context of deities worshipped by the Arabs. Was this softening in preparation for something bigger?

Then comes another important disclosure:

O Muhammad these people have left no stone unturned to tempt you away from that which We have revealed to you *so that you might fabricate something in Our name*. Had you done that, they would have made you their friend. *It was just possible that you might have inclined a little towards them, if We had not given you strength*. But if you had done so, We would have made you taste double chastisement in this world as well as in the Hereafter: then you would have found no helper against Us. (17:73–75)¹⁹

These verses unmistakably record that, had Allah not intervened, Muhammad “might have inclined a little” to “fabricate something in Our name.” It seems unbelievable that the Prophet would develop any such inclination, but this is precisely what the Quran reveals.*

But if Muhammad was ever so inclined, did he perhaps yield at a later stage?

* This raises the question: Why did the Quran need to make such a damaging disclosure? The answer may lie in the fact, as depicted in the above verses, that there was an interactive engagement between the Quraysh and Muhammad. It is reasonable to infer that if the Prophet was inclining a little towards the Quraysh (which is documented by the Quran itself), this may have been revealed in his dialogs as well. The Quran may not thus have disclosed something that was hidden from the Quraysh or from the Prophet’s companions who may have participated in such discussions.

- **Surah Maryam and the migration to Abyssinia**

This brings us to another important event, which too happened a little before the incident of the Satanic Verses is reported to have taken place. A contingent of the believers was instructed by the Prophet to migrate to the Christian kingdom of Abyssinia, to try to create an alternative base.* Muslim historians record that they presented themselves to the Christian king and recited verses 16–26 of *Surah Maryam*.²⁰ While reading these verses, it is interesting to ponder whether the Quran misunderstands the Christian faith regarding the contact between Mary and the spirit.

And, O Muhammad, relate in this Book the story of Mary: how she had retired in seclusion from her people to the eastern side and had hung down a screen to hide herself from them. There *We sent to her Our Spirit ("an angel") and he appeared before her in the form of a perfect man.* Mary cried out involuntarily, "I seek God's refuge from you, if you are a pious man." He replied, "I am a mere messenger from your Lord and have been sent to give you a pure son." Mary said, "How can I bear a son, when no man has touched me, and I am not an unchaste woman?" The angel replied, "So shall it be. Your Lord says, "This is an easy thing for Me to do, and We will do so in order to make that boy a Sign for the people and a blessing from Us, and this must happen'." Accordingly, Mary conceived the child, and with it she went away to a distant place. *Then the throes of childbirth urged her to take shelter under a date palm. There she began to cry, "Oh! would that I had died before this and sunk into oblivion."* (19:16–23)²¹

These verses avoid disputing the Christian faith, regarding Jesus as the son of God. They also raise the following questions.

- Why were the verses clearly rejecting the Christian faith not recited? These include certain later verses of *Surah Maryam* itself ["This is Jesus, the son of Mary, and this is the truth

* It is noted in Ibn Ishaq's account reproduced above that some of those who had migrated to Abyssinia, upon hearing the news of reconciliation between the Prophet and the Quraysh after the incident of the Satanic Verses, decided to return to Mecca. The incident of the Satanic Verses is thus dated a little after the migration to Abyssinia.

about him concerning which they are in doubt. It does not behoove God to beget a son for He is far above this. When He decrees a thing, He only says, 'Be,' and it does come into being." (19:34–35)].²² These verses also do not sit well with the ones that were actually recited to the Christian king, and may perhaps have been revealed (and added to *Surah Maryam*) later.

- Why did God's spirit appear before Mary "in perfect human form," while she was in seclusion, so that she was even scared to see him?
- Why did the "perfect man" say "I have been sent to give you a pure son"? Why not simply the news of a son?*
- Why did Mary, while experiencing childbirth, express remorse: "Oh! would that I had died before this and sunk into oblivion"?

At the very least, these verses do seem tailored towards a Christian audience. It is not surprising, therefore, that the king of Abyssinia was touched and said, "Of a truth, this and what Jesus brought have come from the same niche."²³

What is also the notable feature here is that this compromising spirit towards Christianity appeared just a little ahead of the incident of the Satanic Verses.

- **Surah An-Najm**

It is time now to consult the *Surah* most directly implicated in the incident. Before examining the relevant verses, it is worth noting that if the incident of the Satanic Verses did take place, one would expect certain other issues to arise in parallel. Some people would have accused Muhammad of going astray and of delusional behavior. To others, this may have established that the whole of the Quran was nothing but a concoction and that Gabriel never visited Muhammad. Yet others (including possibly some believers,

* Although Yusuf Ali's translation as well as Hilali and Khan's add the words "(to announce)," these are not part of the Quranic text. Pickthall agrees with Maududi and translates: "He said: I am only a messenger of thy Lord, *that I may bestow on thee a faultless son.*"

who may have welcomed the concession in favor of the three goddesses because of their own past association with them) would have demanded that Allah at least clarify in unambiguous terms that these goddesses did not have the authority to intercede with Allah. One would expect these issues to arise alongside the incident.

One striking feature of this *Surah* is that it addresses all three issues in the same breath:

By the Star. When it set, *your companion is neither gone astray nor deluded*. He does not speak of his own desire; it is but a Revelation which is sent down to him. One mighty in power has taught him, who is endowed with great wisdom. He stood poised in front when he was on the uppermost horizon. Then he drew near and hung suspended above, two bow-lengths away or even closer. Then he revealed to the servant of Allah whatever he had to reveal. The heart belied not what he saw. *Do you then dispute with him concerning what he sees (with the eyes)?* And he saw him once again by the farthest lote-tree, nearby which is the Garden of Repose. At that time the lote-tree was covered with that which covered it. The sight was neither dazzled nor it exceeded the limit, and he saw of the greatest Signs of his Lord. "Now tell: Have you ever pondered over the reality of this Lat, and this `Uzza, and another, the third goddess, Manat? Are the sons for you and the daughters for Allah? This would indeed be an unfair division! These are nothing but mere names which you and your forefathers have invented. Allah has sent down no authority for them." (53:1–23)²⁴

The *Surah* starts with the assurance "your companion is neither gone astray nor deluded," which shows that questions must have been raised to this effect. That the issue should have arisen in the context exactly of the very verses implicated in the incident of the Satanic Verses is noteworthy.

Equally intriguing is the fact that the *Surah* then devotes so much space to how Muhammad interacted with Gabriel.* This suggests that doubts had arisen whether Gabriel at all visited

* According to Hilali-Khan this refers to "*Mi'raj*: (Ascent of the Prophet over the seven heavens)," but the exact context is not so important.

Muhammad, which necessitated the explanation. That this should have been in the precise context of the verses that are so directly linked with the incident of the Satanic Verses is again informative.

Also, of hundreds of gods and goddesses all believed by the Arabs to have powers of intercession, the Quran somehow singled out just the three goddesses to tell the Arabs: “Allah had sent down no authority for them.” They happened to be Lat, ‘Uzza, and Manat—the three at the heart of the debated incident. Why just these three? Why not say: “Allah has not sent down any authority for any of the idols worshipped by you”? Just excluding these three would normally mean that other gods and goddesses were not part of the exclusion—unless, of course, there was a special reason to mention only these three. And if there was such special reason, what could that be? It is at least fair to conclude that some incident regarding these goddesses must have taken place, as the Quran would not otherwise have any cause to separate them from the rest. And because Muslim historians do not record any other episode explaining why these three goddesses should have been mentioned in this *Surah*, the incident of the Satanic Verses is the only candidate in the field.

The fact, then, that all three issues that would naturally have arisen from the incident are discussed together is difficult to explain except in the context of the debated incident. *Surah An-Najm* thus provides fairly conclusive evidence that an incident of this nature did occur. Let us see if we can find further corroboration in the Quran, however.

- **Surah Al-Hajj**

This *Surah*, too, makes an important announcement:

And O Muhammad (it has always been so with) every Messenger and Prophet We sent before you that whenever he had a desire, Satan tried to interfere with his desire. *But Allah eradicates the mischiefs worked by Satan and confirms His revelations*, for Allah is All-knowing, All-Wise. (He allows this) so that He may make Satan’s obstacles a trial for those, whose hearts suffer from the disease (of hypocrisy) and whose hearts are false—the fact is that these unjust people have gone far away

in their enmity—and so that those who have knowledge may realize that this (Message) is the Truth from Allah and may believe in it, and their hearts may submit humbly to it. Most surely Allah always guides the Believers to the Straight Way. (22:52–54)²⁵

The following critical disclosures are hard to miss.

- These verses record that “every Messenger and Prophet” had suffered some mischief at the hands of Satan. If Muhammad was an exception to this rule, the above verses fail to state that.
- They explain that this was so Allah could make a trial for those who were diseased.
- They further record that Allah “eradicates the mischief worked by Satan and confirms His revelations.”

The question then is: What mischief had Muhammad suffered at the hands of Satan that needed to be eradicated through Allah confirming His revelations?

Ibn Ishaq informs us that these verses were revealed shortly after the incident of the Satanic Verses, when “the apostle was bitterly grieved and was greatly in fear of God,” and were meant to console the Prophet.* The exact timing of these verses is not so relevant, however. They may have been issued immediately after the incident, to console Muhammad or even to resurrect his image, which must have taken a hit on account of the *volte-face* (his

* There is some debate on this, though. Maududi, for instance, disagrees with the timing and on that basis also disagrees with the object of these verses: “*This verse (52) in which the interpolation by Satan was abrogated* was sent down in the first year of Hijrah, i.e. about two years after the reproof (17:73). Can a person in his senses believe that the Holy Prophet was reproofed for the interpolation after six years, and it was abrogated after nine years?” (Maududi: *The Meaning of the Qur’an*, note 101 to *Surah Al-Hajj* Volume 3, p. 220). Even Maududi, however, concedes that this verse does abrogate some interpolation by Satan. Hashmi, in contrast, though he challenges the incident of the Satanic Verses on other grounds, concedes, “Not all Quranic verses grouped into individual *suras* date from the same time, and it is possible that Q. 17:73–75 and 22:52–54 do indeed relate to 53:19–23, as held by some of the earliest traditionists” (“The Quran and Tolerance: An Interpretive Essay on Verse 5:48,” p. 87).

followers needed to be reassured that other prophets, too, had been deceived in the past), or may perhaps have been revealed at a subsequent stage. What the verses do unmistakably establish, however, is that Satan did deceive Muhammad, at least once—to such an extent that Allah had to “eradicate the mischief” and “confirm His revelations.”

That being the position stated by the Quran, unless one identifies another instance in which the Prophet was misled by Satan and in which Allah intervened to eradicate the mischief and to confirm His revelations, there is no choice but to accept the incident of the Satanic Verses as true. It is thus ironic that the only way for Muslim analysts to try to disprove the incident is to at least identify a similar occurrence! Short of that, there is no option but to accept that the incident of the Satanic Verses did take place.*

*

Bringing all this together, not only is the incident of the Satanic Verses reported by Muslim historians “who included many authentic and eminent scholars”²⁶ and who would not lightly circulate a story so damaging to the Prophet, there is also evidence in the Quran that about the same period, the Prophet seemed willing to experiment with compromises. This is visible in the verse that softens the rule against intercession† as well as in the verses that tell us that Muhammad “might have inclined a little” to “fabricate something in Our name.” The same compromising spirit is visible in certain verses of *Surah Maryam* as well. *Surah An-Najm* and *Surah Al-Hajj* then provide rather conclusive proof that Muhammad did in fact experiment with a contained compromise on intercession. It was a contained

* Even if one finds another instance in which Satan misled the Prophet and Allah intervened to eradicate the mischief, however, this would still not dislocate the incident of the Satanic Verses, which also finds reflection in *Surah An-Najm*. It would only, at best, provide a different context to *Surah Al-Hajj*.

† “And no intercession before Allah can avail anyone except for the one for whom Allah permits it.” (34:23)

compromise in that he wasn't permitting intercession by all gods and goddesses, just by the three that happened to be located away from the Ka'ba. He backtracked, but he left enough traces in the Quran that are impossible to explain any other way.

Lastly, one may also note the following verse: “We bring a better verse or at least the like of it for whatever We abrogate *or cause it to be forgotten*” (2:106).²⁷ We encountered this in the context of the Sword Verses while discussing that abrogation is a deliberate tool employed by the Quran, but here it is the words “or cause it to be forgotten” that draw our attention. The abrogated verses clearly do not fit this description, as they are mentioned as a separate category from verses that are caused to be forgotten, and also remain part of the Quran even once superseded by other verses (so are not forgotten). Only a verse stricken from the Quran can qualify under the description “cause it to be forgotten.” Which, then, are the “forgotten” verses that the Quran is referring to here? The Satanic Verses, perhaps?

*

If the incident of the Satanic Verses did happen—and the evidence is overwhelming that it did—is it possible that Satan may have deceived the Prophet on other occasions as well? Far more plausible is that Satan did not even interfere in the case of the Satanic Verses but is unjustly accused.

disobey:’ And they had to drink into their hearts (of the taint) of the calf because of their Faithlessness. Say: ‘Vile indeed are the behests of your Faith if ye have any faith!’”

- 28 It seems that they were not alone in being blamed for sins they did not commit. Consider *Surah Al-Maidah* verse 14 (Maududi’s translation): “Likewise We bound by a covenant those people, who said, ‘We are Nasara.’ But they too, forgot much of what had been taught to them. *So We sowed among them seeds of discord, enmity and hatred that shall last up to the Day of Resurrection*, and surely the time will come when Allah will tell them of what they had been contriving in the world.” (5:14) Why should subsequent generations have been made to suffer for sins committed by those ahead of them? Yusuf Ali’s translation: “From those, too, who call themselves Christians, We did take a covenant, but they forgot a good part of the message that was sent them: *so we estranged them, with enmity and hatred between the one and the other, to the day of judgment*. And soon will Allah show them what it is they have done.”
- 29 *Surah Bani Israel* verse 15. Yusuf Ali’s translation: “No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another.”
- 30 *Surah An-Nisa* verse 140. Yusuf Ali’s translation: “Already has He sent you Word in the Book, that when ye hear the *signs of Allah held in defiance and ridicule*, ye are not to sit with them unless they turn to a different theme: if ye did, ye would be like them. For Allah will collect the hypocrites and those who defy faith—all in Hell.”
- 31 *Surah Al-Baqarah* verses 274–281. Yusuf Ali’s translation: “Those who (in charity) spend of their goods by night and by day, in secret and in public, have their reward with their Lord: on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. *Those who devour usury will not stand except as stand one whom the Evil one by his touch Hath driven to madness. That is because they say: ‘Trade is like usury,’ but Allah hath permitted trade and forbidden usury. Those who after receiving direction from their Lord, desist, shall be pardoned for the past; their case is for Allah (to judge); but those who repeat (The offence) are companions of the Fire: They will abide therein (for ever). Allah will deprive usury of all blessing, but will give increase for deeds of charity*. For He loveth not creatures ungrateful and wicked. Those who believe, and do deeds of righteousness, and establish regular prayers and regular charity, will have their reward with their Lord: on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. *O ye who believe! Fear Allah, and give up what remains of your demand for usury, if ye are indeed believers. If ye do it not, Take notice of war from Allah and His Messenger. But if ye turn back, ye shall have your capital sums: Deal not unjustly, and ye shall not be dealt with unjustly*. If the debtor is in a difficulty, grant him time Till it is easy for him to repay. But if ye remit it by way of charity, that is best for you if ye only knew. And fear the Day when ye shall be brought back to Allah. Then shall every soul be paid what it earned, and none shall be dealt with unjustly.”

Chapter 10: The “Satanic” Verses

- 1 *Surah Al-Hajj*, verse 52. Yusuf Ali’s translation appears later in the chapter.
- 2 Esposito: *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, p. 563
- 3 Hashmi: “The Quran and Tolerance: An Interpretive Essay on Verse 5:48,” p. 87
- 4 Ibn Ishaq: *The Life of Muhammad*, p. 62
- 5 *Surah Al-Fil* verses 1–5. Yusuf Ali’s translation: “Seest thou not how thy Lord dealt with the Companions of the Elephant? Did He not make their treacherous plan go astray? And He sent against them Flights of Birds, Striking them with stones of baked clay. Then did He make them like an empty field of stalks and straw, (of which the corn) has been eaten up.”
- 6 Reza Aslan: *No God but God*, p. 178
- 7 According to other accounts, however, it was struck and broken into pieces by a stone fired from a catapult at the time of the Umayyad siege of Mecca in 756, and according to yet other accounts, this happened after the stone was stolen in 930 by a Bahraini tribe.
- 8 Respectively, *Surah Al-Ankabut* verses 61–63 and *Surah Az-Zumar* verse 38. Yusuf Ali’s translations: “If indeed thou ask them who has created the heavens and the earth and subjected the sun and the moon (to his Law), *they will certainly reply, ‘(Allah)’. How are they then deluded away (from the truth)? ... And if indeed thou ask them who it is that sends down rain from the sky, and gives life therewith to the earth after its death, they will certainly reply, ‘(Allah)!’*”; “If indeed thou ask them who it is that created the heavens and the earth, they would be sure to say, ‘(Allah).’” The same message is also expressed in *Surah Yunus* verse 31 (10:31) and *Surah Al-Muminoon* verses 86–92 (23:86–92).

- ⁹ *Surah Yunus* verse 18. Yusuf Ali's translation: "They serve, besides Allah, things that hurt them not nor profit them, and they say: *These are our intercessors with Allah!*"
- ¹⁰ *Surah Az-Zumar* verse 3. Yusuf Ali's translation: "But those who take for protectors other than Allah (say): *We only serve them in order that they may bring us nearer to Allah.*' Truly Allah will judge between them in that wherein they differ."
- ¹¹ As in *Surah Al-Imran* verse 151. Maududi's translation: "The time is coming when We will cast awe into the hearts of the rejecters of the Truth: *this is because they have set up with Allah partners, for whom He has sent no authority.*" (3:151) Yusuf Ali's translation: "Soon shall We cast terror into the hearts of the Unbelievers, *for that they joined companions with Allah,* for which He had sent no authority."
- ¹² That they did not concede the charge is demonstrated by *Surah Al-Anaam* verses 22–24. Maududi's translation: "On the Day, when We muster them all together, We shall ask the *mushrikin*, 'Where are now your associates whom you had taken for your deities?' Then they shall not be able to play any other trick (than make this false statement): *We swear by You, our Lord, we were not at all mushrikin.*' Behold, how they will invent a lie against themselves and how all the false gods, they had forged, will forsake them!" (6:22–24). Also *Surah An-Nahl* verse 28–29: "Yes, this is for those *disbelievers*, who, while they are still engaged in wronging themselves, shall surrender themselves when seized by the angels, saying, *We were doing nothing wrong at all.*' The angels will retort, 'What, dare you deny this! Allah is fully aware of what you were doing. Now, go and enter the gates of Hell, where you shall abide for ever.' The fact is that a very miserable abode it is for the haughty ones." (16:28–29) Yusuf Ali's translations: "One day shall We gather them all together: We shall say to those who ascribed partners (to Us): 'Where are the partners whom ye (invented and) talked about? There will then be (left) no subterfuge for them but to say: *'By Allah our Lord, we were not those who joined gods with Allah.*' Behold! how they lie against their own souls! But the (lie) which they invented will leave them in the lurch"; "(Namely) those whose lives the angels take in a state of wrong-doing to their own souls. Then would they offer submission (with the pretence), *We did no evil (knowingly).*' (The angels will reply), 'Nay, but verily Allah knoweth all that ye did; *'So enter the gates of Hell, to dwell therein. Thus evil indeed is the abode of the arrogant.*"
- ¹³ Ibn Ishaq: *The Life of Muhammad*, p. 165
- ¹⁴ Ibn Ishaq: *The Life of Muhammad*, p. 166
- ¹⁵ Maududi: *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, note 101 to *Surah Al-Hajj*, Volume 3, p. 222
- ¹⁶ Hashmi: "The Quran and Tolerance: An Interpretive Essay on Verse 5:48," p. 87
- ¹⁷ *Surah Al-Jinn* verses 1–2. Maududi's translation: "O Prophet, say: It has been revealed to me that a company of the jinn listened, then (returning to their folks) they said, 'We have indeed heard a wonderful Quran which guides to the right way, so we have believed in it, and now we shall never associate anyone with our Lord.'" (72:1–2) Yusuf Ali's translation: "Say: It has been revealed to me that a company of Jinns listened (to the Qur'an). They said, 'We have really heard a wonderful Recital! It gives guidance to the Right, and we have believed therein: we shall not join (in worship) any (gods) with our Lord.'" The same theme is then repeated in *Surah Al-Abqaf* verses 39–42 (46:39–42).
- ¹⁸ *Surah Saba* verses 22–23. Maududi's translation: "(O Prophet) say (to the Mushriks), 'Call those whom you worship as deities instead of Allah. They neither own an atom's weight of anything in the heavens nor in the earth, nor have they anything to share in either, nor is any of them a helper of Allah. *And no intercession before Allah can avail anyone except for the one for whom Allah permits it.*'" (34:22–23) Yusuf Ali's translation: "Say: 'Call upon other (gods) whom ye fancy, besides Allah. They have no power, nor the weight of an atom, in the heavens or on earth: No (sort of) share have they therein, nor is any of them a helper to Allah. *No intercession can avail in His Presence, except for those for whom He has granted permission.*'"
- ¹⁹ *Surah Bani Israel* verses 73–75. Yusuf Ali's translation: "And their purpose was to tempt thee away from that which We had revealed unto thee, *to substitute in our name something quite different; (in that case), behold!* they would certainly have made thee (their) friend! *And had We not given thee strength, thou wouldst nearly have inclined to them a little.* In that case We should have made thee taste an equal portion (of punishment) in this life, and an equal portion in death: and moreover thou wouldst have found none to help thee against Us!"
- ²⁰ Rogerson: *The Prophet Muhammad*, p. 106
- ²¹ *Surah Maryam* verses 16–23. Yusuf Ali's translation: "Relate in the Book (the story of) Mary, when she withdrew from her family to a place in the East. She placed a screen (to screen herself)

- from them; *then We sent her our angel, and he appeared before her as a man in all respects.* She said: 'I seek refuge from thee to ((Allah)) Most Gracious: (come not near) if thou dost fear Allah.' He said: 'Nay, I am only a messenger from thy Lord, (to announce) to thee the gift of a holy son. She said: 'How shall I have a son, seeing that no man has touched me, and I am not unchaste?' He said: 'So (it will be): Thy Lord saith, "that is easy for Me: and (We wish) to appoint him as a Sign unto men and a Mercy from Us": It is a matter (so) decreed.' So she conceived him, and she retired with him to a remote place. *And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm-tree: She cried (in her anguish): 'Ah! would that I had died before this! would that I had been a thing forgotten and out of sight!'*"
- 22 Yusuf Ali's translation: "Such (was) Jesus the son Of Mary: (it is) a statement Of truth, about which They (vainly) dispute. It is not befitting To (the majesty of) God That He should beget A son. Glory be to Him! When He determines A matter, He only says To it, 'Be', and it is."
- 23 Ibn Ishaq: *The Life of Muhammad*, p. 152
- 24 *Surah An-Najm* verses 1–23. Yusuf Ali's translation: "By the Star when it goes down, *Your Companion is neither astray nor being misled.* Nor does he say (ought) of (his own) Desire. It is no less than inspiration sent down to him: He was taught by one Mighty in Power, Endued with Wisdom: for he appeared (in stately form); While he was in the highest part of the horizon: Then he approached and came closer, And was at a distance of but two bow-lengths or (even) nearer; So did ((Allah)) convey the inspiration to His Servant (conveyed) what He (meant) to convey. The (Prophet's) (mind and) heart in no way falsified that which he saw. *Will ye then dispute with him concerning what he saw?* For indeed he saw him at a second descent, Near the Lote-tree beyond which none may pass: Near it is the Garden of Abode. Behold, the Lote-tree was shrouded (in mystery unspeakable) (His) sight never swerved, nor did it go wrong! For truly did he see, of the Signs of his Lord, the Greatest! Have ye seen Lat and 'Uzza, And another, the third (goddess), Manat? What! for you the male sex, and for Him, the female? Behold, such would be indeed a division most unfair! These are nothing but names which ye have devised, ye and your fathers, for which Allah has sent down no authority (whatever)."
- 25 *Surah Al-Hajj* verses 52–54. Yusuf Ali's translation: "Never did We send an apostle or a prophet before thee, but, when he framed a desire, Satan threw some (vanity) into his desire: *but Allah will cancel anything (vain) that Satan throws in, and Allah will confirm (and establish) His Signs:* for Allah is full of Knowledge and Wisdom: That He may make the suggestions thrown in by Satan, but a trial for those in whose hearts is a disease and who are hardened of heart: verily the wrong-doers are in a schism far (from the Truth): And that those on whom knowledge has been bestowed may learn that the (Qur'an) is the Truth from thy Lord, and that they may believe therein, and their hearts may be made humbly (open) to it: for verily Allah is the Guide of those who believe, to the Straight Way."
- 26 Maududi (as quoted above)
- 27 *Surah Al-Baqarah* verse 106. Yusuf Ali's translation: "None of Our revelations do We abrogate *or cause to be forgotten*, but We substitute something better or similar."

Chapter 11: Undistracted by Religion

- 1 *Surah Ha Mim As Sajdah* verse 52. Yusuf Ali's translation: "Say: 'See ye if the (Revelation) is (really) from Allah, and yet do ye reject it? Who is more astray than one who is in a schism far (from any purpose)?'"
- 2 Respectively, *Surah At-Taubah* verse 36 and *Surah Al-Maidah* verse 2. Yusuf Ali's translations: "The number of months in the sight of Allah is twelve (in a year) so ordained by Him the day He created the heavens and the earth; *of them four are sacred:* that is the straight usage. So wrong not yourselves therein."; "O ye who believe! Violate not the sanctity of the symbols of Allah, *nor of the sacred month.*"